IJCEAS

International Journal of Contemporary Economics and Administrative Sciences
ISSN: 1925 – 4423
Volume :6, Special Issue:1, Year:2016, pp 87 - 104
Implications of Borders on Culture and Economics
edited by Martin Barthel, James W. Scott and Cengiz Demir

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES, CONSUMPTION AND CULTURAL CAPITAL: CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING IN POST-SOCIALIST SLOVENIA

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Abstract

The contribution deals with cultural memory and tourism in the case of cross-border shopping in Slovenia, a former socialist republic of Yugoslavia. It points out the special position that Slovenia had with its geographical location, sharing borders with Austria and Italy by analyzing narratives of informants, born before and immediately after WW2. The contribution examines cross-border shopping to 'Western' capitalistic countries in the period between mid-1960s and late 1980s and the period after the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. The contribution will examine an important distinction between shopping tourism and leisure tourism, since Yugoslav citizens travelled abroad in large numbers for both recreation and shopping. The article places reasons for cross-border shopping into a wider context of socialist economy. A detailed description of shopping practices with an emphasis on gender division is also given. The paper will contribute to the discussion of the perception of individuals on cross-border shopping in the context of political implications of the historical changes and processes of de- and re-bordering in post-socialist Yugoslavia.

Keywords: *Cross-Border Shopping, Post-socialism, Gender, Reconfiguration of Borders, EU*

Introduction

The contribution examines cross-border shopping to 'Western' capitalistic countries in the period between mid-1960s, when Yugoslavia opened up towards the West and late 1980s. Cross-border shopping is a common activity in many parts of the world and a border-related phenomena. According to O'Dowd (2001: 67) political borders are the inevitable outcome of the range and limits of power and

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coercion, social organization, the division of labor and the promotion of a collective identity within a delimited territory. In this context borders are understood as multi-dimensional, complex, ambiguous, contradictory, flexible and durable (O'Dowd, 2001: 69). As stated in Timothy (1995: 525) international boundaries are invisible vertical planes that transect the airspace, the soil and the subsoil between adjoining states, marking the limit of territory in which a state can exercise its sovereign authority. Borders limit contact between people and can function as lines of economic containment and military defence (Prescott, 1987). However, in addition to their role as lines of separation, boundaries may also be viewed as lines of contact: places where similar dissimilar cultures and economies converge (Timothy, 1995: 526).

There is little information in the literature to offer a conceptual basis for studying the relationship between political boundaries, consumption and tourism therefore, the purpose of this paper is to address these gaps by examining the perception of people on cross-border shopping in the context of gender division. A special attention is placed on newly acquired cultural capital. Also, the paper will point out the perception of individuals on cross-border shopping in the context of the political implications of the historical changes and processes of de- and re-bordering in post-socialist Yugoslavia after its disintegration in 1991. The analysis consists of open interviews with mainly female informants, born before and immediately after WW2, living their active lives in the time of socialism. Through their experiences of shopping abroad, particularly in Italy and Austria, the article will demonstrate how consumption and tourism were interconnected, including discourses of other informants to provide a broader context.

The oral history approach will be used to explore women's history from the perspective of subjective interpretation, arguing that the oral history method is usable not to obtain objective, but subjective information (see Oakley, 2003; Riessman, 1987; Ritchie, 1995; Thompson, 2000). By using the oral history approach, it is not aimed to reconstruct the socialist past, but to provide a different perspective on it, based on the experiences of women's everyday practices. In this way an additional discourse will be added to the already existing official historic narratives, filling a gap by including the cultural and social narration about the every-day life of ordinary people. It must be taken into account that memory is always a reconstruction and representation of the past with an active production of the meaning by informants (see Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Crowley and Reid, 2000; Koleva, 2012). We will try to understand the meanings that the informants now ascribe to the past, how they perceive it, feel about it and shape it in accordance to the present.

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Since the beginning of the 1950s, socialist Yugoslavia was very different from the Eastern European socialist countries in terms of personal life standard, tourism, travelling, shopping abroad and the imitation of the Western way of life. Freedom to travel and consume established Yugoslavia's status as a hybrid between East and West and marked its separate road to communism. The country was more open to Western influences in terms of consumption trends and nurturing the belief that every citizen is entitled to a good quality of life, measured in accordance with consumption objects (Mikula, 2010; Patterson 2011). In the early 1950s, Tito's regime embarked on a number of reforms, such as retreat from central planning towards market socialism, consumer orientation and openness to the West. Simultaneously with the ongoing industrialization, a rapid urbanization and general modernization of society took place after World War Two. The basic social welfare was represented in the form of consumption and leisure time (Duda, 2005: 143).

In terms of territory, Slovenia was not a large part of Yugoslavia. Slovenes represented 8.4 % of the Yugoslav population. However, Slovenia had an important political influence within Yugoslav federalism. Slovenian policy was in favor of more liberal economic-political discourses, especially regarding a larger role of market and political decentralization of power. Following the introduction of the free-market system in Yugoslavia, which allowed the development of a lifestyle superior to that of any other country in the Eastern Block, the official discourse on consumption produced mixed messages. According to Repe (1998) on one hand, consumption was seen as a reward for workers, and on the other as social evil. The Slovenes found themselves in a paradoxical position, because they believed in self-management, Tito and the non-alignment movement, but also in washing machines, televisions and other consumer products.

Between 1960 and 1970, there was a rapid increase of the standard of living in Yugoslavia. This was partly a result of a high level of employment and wage increases. The American culture, portrayed in the form of movies, rock and roll, new household appliances and the idea of freedom of choice in modern supermarkets gave Yugoslavs a different perspective on how spending their leisure. Images of the Western world created the expectations of a future with a better life and social well-being (Vučetić, 2012: 364). It turned out that people took the dream of a better and happier world more seriously, than the state ever imagined.

'Cross-border shopping' vs. 'touristic shopping' in the context of socialist economy

The nature of cross-border shopping in the former Yugoslavia changed over time, reflecting the evolving political and economic processes after the World War II. In the early 1950s and early 1960s trips abroad were still restricted and limited. From the late 1950s, travelling abroad became easier for Yugoslav citizens because of easily accessible passports and the establishment of a visa regime for leisure travel. Until the year 1954, when the *London Memorandum* resolved the distribution of an independent territory of Trieste to Italy and Yugoslavia, Yugoslavs rarely travelled to Italy. In 1955, Yugoslavia and Italy singed the *Videm agreement on local border traffic*, according to which the permission for border crossing was extended to all border population within ten kilometers of the border. Border crossings became more common. People not living close to the border were able to cross with a passport.

According to Repe (1998: 94) *the Ossim agreements* between Italy and Yugoslavia in 1975 turned the Yugoslav-Italian border to the most open border between any capitalist and socialist state. From 1962 onwards, Yugoslavs could legally buy foreign currency and keep foreign-currency bank accounts. In shopping destinations across the border shopkeepers accepted the Yugoslav Dinar at an exchange rate more favorable than the official one. The proximity of the Western borders contributed significantly to the expansion of consumer mentality. Because of the neighboring countries, the citizens of Yugoslavia were more familiar with the western lifestyle than elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain. Among the republics of Yugoslavia, Slovenia had a privileged position in terms of access to products from Western capitalist countries due to the borders with Italy and Austria. Therefore Slovenian consumerism has developed to a greater extent than in other republics of the socialist Yugoslavia (see Mikula, 2010; Repe, 1998; Švab, 1998).

However, its geographical position and the proximity of the western borders were not the only factors. According to Mikula (2010) the nature of cross-border shopping changed over time also due to the economic and political processes. In the 1950s and early 1960s travelling abroad was still very restricted, but in the 1960s Yugoslavia accepted economic reforms and incorporated elements of the free-market system which eventually lead to the heyday of former Yugoslav cross-border shopping. The economic reform in 1965 had reduced the role of the state in the economy and gradually started to deploy market socialism. Goals of the new five-

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year plan (1966–70) strived to increase personal consumption, modernization and greater freedom in the marketplace, since the state and the Communist Party realized, that the desired satisfaction could no longer be postponed into the future. All this resulted in the fact that Yugoslavs could travel abroad, explore, buy items and bring them home. Thus, in between the mid-1960s and early 1980s cross-border shopping blossomed in Yugoslavia.

Until today, many researchers have studied the cultural significance and influence of shopping in the neighboring capitalist countries Austria and Italy and their influence on the daily lives of Slovenians (see Luthar, 2006; Mikula, 2010; Repe, 1998; Švab, 1998). Mikula (2010) uses the term 'cross-border shopping', which is defined as the 'movement of people across an international border with the expressed intention of buying goods and then returning home' (Donnan and Wilson in Mikula, 2010: 214). Wessely (2002, 6–8) defines 'shopping tourism' in opposition to 'tourism shopping' as the 'travel abroad with the explicit aim to buy goods that are unavailable or difficult to find in one's home country'. In her opinion, 'shopping tourism' is leisure travel combined with purposive economic activity. It represents one of the manifestations of an informal 'private economy' within the social system, therefore it had different meanings and functions in the lives of the various socioeconomic strata.

'Tourist shopping' can represent a form of leisure activity in the form of an excursion or a rational economic transaction, which means consuming products and services abroad, where they are significantly cheaper than in home countries. Nevertheless, as Bracewell (2006) points out, shopping and tourism are always intertwined since shopping was what a Yugoslav tourists did. International cross-border shopping is not only an economic activity, but it can be understood as a pleasure-based form of recreational travel and a major tourism generator in border areas (Timothy and Butler, 1995).

Chelcea (2002: 26, 30), who researched shopping trips in Hungary, distinguishes between three types of trader-tourists: 'household-oriented', 'profit-oriented' and 'leisure seeking'. 'Household-oriented' are those travelers, who are doing 'cross-border shopping' for the needs of their own household as opposed to 'profit-oriented', who resell goods, bought abroad. They do not perform the usual tourist activities, because their trips are standardized and time limited. Unlike them, 'leisure seekers' practice 'shopping tourism', which requires more free time of the traveler.

Švab (1998) uses the term 'shopping tourism' without problematizing it, while Luthar (2010: 362) considers that in the case of Yugoslavs shopping in Trieste, the term 'shopping tourism' is not appropriate because the performed tourism does not have much in common with tourism as a specific cultural form. Shopping in Trieste was not a recreational practice as in the case of 'shopping tourism', which also includes browsing through exhibited goods in the shops and doing sightseeing. This kind of shopping was experienced as deliberate and planned work and not as hedonistic wandering. Arguably in trying to define shopping abroad, it is necessary to derive from the experiences of informants. They perceive shopping in neighboring Austria and Italy as work, but also as a trip. When discussing shopping in neighboring Austria and Italy with an exclusive purpose of buying goods, from which touristic sightseeing was excluded, the term 'cross-border shopping' will be used. When talking about a trip which basic aim is not shopping, but rather touristic sightseeing, the term 'touristic shopping' will be used.

As Appadurai (1996: 83) points out, consumption is a serious form of work in terms of governing the consumer credit, reading fashion messages, managing finances and dreaming, all which is necessary for the desire for new goods. When Meta, an accountant, born in 1928 in Domžale near Ljubljana, went shopping to Ponte Rosso, she did not go sightseeing. She saw only stands and stores while shopping. Other informants said that they did not have the time to do sight-seeing because they rather used their precious time for shopping. Meta usually went on the one day 'cross-border shopping', which was 'domestic oriented' and motivated by the explicit aim of purchasing goods. These trips took place during the weekend and began early in the morning. She returned home on the same day. She remembered that she did not buy lunch in Italy, just snacks. She ate lunch with her friends in Slovenia, next to the border, because it was cheaper. However, when she arrived to Trieste, she always went for coffee: "*Coffee there was so good. Oh god! You could cut the Cappuccino's foam!"*

Doing 'cross-border shopping', Slovenians were becoming skilled buyers. Their consumption culture was based on oral information about products and pricing. Unlike 'flaneur' browsing (Wilson, 1992) in shopping centers, the socialist consumer prepared for shopping, analyzing thoughtfully the use of the goods, looking for useful contacts. According to informants, the reasons for shopping in neighboring countries were connected with the insufficient and overpriced supply at home, just as with the low quality and the unfashionable appearance of domestic products. Meta was buying products that were of a better appearance than those back home and she was impressed by the great choice. She remembered:

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"Once I bought boots. I had skinny feet and boots, made at home, did not fit me. Italian women have very thin feet. Never in my life had I such beautiful boots. They were the first boots that I bought by myself. Before that, I wore my sister's boots. They were really beautiful, brown. In Italy, they had very beautiful things, but at home the boot was bigger than the foot. If I wanted to buy something, I bought something beautiful and at home there was not much to choose from."

'Cross-border shopping' can be understood as a critique of the socialist system and its unsatisfactory supply of products at home, differing from one time period to the other. Particularly in the 1950s and in the first half of the 1960s, purchases abroad were conditioned by the low standard of life in Yugoslavia. The increasing lifestyle in Yugoslavia was reflected in a greater choice and quality of available products. Meta remembered:

"Later, after the 1970s, it was possible to get many products at home and it was not worth going shopping abroad. Going abroad also meant travel expenses."

Today Meta shakes her head when she hears that it was not possible to buy things in Yugoslavia - since the late socialist era she was mostly satisfied with what could be found in domestic stores. She pointed out that products bought back then, were of a better quality and more beautiful than they are today. She proudly told that she is still wearing pieces of clothing, bought in socialist Yugoslavia.

Her comments point out that we need to critically re-evaluate the anthropological studies of the post-socialist material culture, which are mainly based on Kornai's (1992) definition of socialism as an 'economy of shortage', while according to Shalins (in Fehérváry 2009: 434), the very expression 'rarity' was created from the perspective of a society, marked by abundance. Fehérváry (2009: 454) points out that socialist material culture became the symbol of the failed economic system and Western goods became icons of the superior capitalist political system. The Western goods were perceived as high quality, with a nice design, comfortable and the promise of pleasure. Their very qualities seemed more than simply the result of a better production system, but as iconic of a superior political system based upon human dignity. The daily encounters with a variety of goods and commercial spheres have also contributed to the gradual materialization of political subjectivity.

Meta did her shopping in Ponte Rosso in Trieste, buying mainly washing powder, coffee and clothing. At first, she did the shopping there because the products were not available at home and later because they were cheaper there. She recalls

Ponte Rosso as a place with cheap products of poor quality and unfriendly salesmen. She remembered:

"I and my friend brought an umbrella from Italy. When I opened it at home, there was a hole in the new umbrella! At Ponte Rosso you could find this kind of goods. I almost took a beating once because I reserved a handbag and said I will come to get it soon. The salesmen saw I bought it elsewhere and he was very angry with me."

According to Vidmar-Horvat (2010: 31, 37) not all consumer goods produced in a socialist country were perceived as tasteless, nor were all adopted or rejected because of their socialist origin. At the same time not all Western products were regarded approvingly by socialist consumers. Socialist culture produced citizens, who were faithful and unfaithful to the state at the same time – not necessarily because of the political belief, but because consumers were caught up in consumer practices that were not based on ideological considerations of the 'political correctness'. However, as Fehérváry (2009: 445–6) states, through the contemporary perspective of capitalist consumption, socialism is being perceived as materially poor and the socialist country is being constructed as an entity, which neglected its citizens. Within this policy and material worlds, the iconic Western goods adopted a remarkable importance, as they became a symbol of the system that produced them.

In the anthropological analysis of post-socialism, as recalled by Thelen (2011: 53–4), the socialist economy is studied insufficient. During the period of socialism, studies of socialist societies were conducted with the use of analytical tools of the Western countries. Through the process of post-socialist reforms that made the socialist institutions seemingly look more like capitalistic ones, the socialist actors, previously perceived as 'similar', now became 'others'. As noted by Vidmar-Horvat (2010: 28–31), Western Europe continues to be represented as an important point of reference in the current 'new Europe'. In it consumers from the former socialist countries are once again embedded into the category of the European 'other' on the basis of memories of the traumatic experiences and the denial of consumer wishes, which is based on the past imagery of the cultural subordination of the East – and the historical domination of the West.

When Meta went to neighboring Austria on a trade-union trip with her coworkers, the venture lasted at least two days, so they stayed in a hotel. Often they went on a trade-union trip during holidays, such as the Republic Day on November 29 or May 1.

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"When we went to Klagenfurt with the company, we did lots of sightseeing. We left home in the morning, I think it was Saturday. Our goal was not to shop. If you found something beautiful, then yes. And if you had money."

These trips were mostly connected with touristic activities, not shopping. Meta remembered that she bought only nail accessories as she went there with the purpose to do sightseeing. Meta was a 'leisure seeker' that practiced 'touristic shopping', which demanded a greater amount of free time. When Meta was shopping in neighboring Italy, in Trieste or Rome, she did not perceive this as mere shopping, but also as a trip, since she visited exhibitions, churches, monuments. In Trieste she went to see the sea, the *Miramare castle* and the main square. Also, when she went on a trade-union trip to the Netherlands, she did not go with the purpose of shopping, but she went there as a tourist, to see the Netherlands, its tulips, paintings of the famous painters in the galleries.

"*I went to see scientific things"*, Meta remembered, and continued: "*When travelling around the world, I bought some trivialities, souvenirs for others and things like that. And we did not stroll around in the stores a lot, because we preferred to see other things.*"

Since the beginning of the 1970s, Yugoslav tourist agencies organized touristic and shopping trips to European metropolises in addition to holidays in foreign countries. Those shopping trips were mainly focused on buying technical goods for amusement, leather goods and clothes (Repe, 1998: 264). Due to the proximity of the Slovenian coast, informants also used the vacation at the sea side to quickly go and shop in neighboring Italy. Vera, an economist, born in Maribor in 1929, remembered:

"We went to the sea side at least once a year. We went to Koper and Portorož. We took advantage of this proximity with the border and we crossed it to buy something. However, we regularly went to Austria, at least twice per month."

Meta bought 'more beautiful things' or 'everyday luxuries', which marked the Yugoslav experience of well-being (Patterson, 2011: 264). 'Cross-border shopping' was one of the ways of achieving the 'good life' in socialist Yugoslavia because consumption is also a source of happiness and joy. It must be pointed out that the Yugoslav society was also able to produce happiness through the production of concrete products, available for people to buy in their own country. A satisfactory life was therefore not only an idea, projected into the distant future, but a reality of living and a foundation for achieving the 'normal' life of socialist citizens.

Cultural capital, gender and rebordering of post-socialist Yugoslavia

"Products bought on stands in Ponte Rosso were cheaper and of worse quality than those, bought in stores, so you had to be very cautious…" Meta often said. She learned that sometimes it was better not to buy anything than to buy a cheap and broken object. On the other hand, at the stands it was possible to haggle over the price, unlike in stores, where the price was fixed. According to distance and type of products, informants had to calculate which city in Italy to choose for shopping. Many preferred to shop in Gorica because it was closer to their home than Trieste. Also the products were of better quality. In Meta's opinion, Rome was known as an expensive city for shopping, Trieste was the best place to buy jeans and Treviso had the best selection and quality of products in Italy.

Through their experiences with 'cross-border shopping' and learning how to shop, how to pay, what one could and could not get abroad, dealing with scarcity, abundance, choice or its absence, Meta and other Slovenians were gaining cultural capital, which manifested in cultural competences and in knowledge on how to consume. They were actively participating in the interpretation of the cultural meanings of the desired goods that acquired new meanings (compare to Bartlett, 2010; Berdahl, 2010; Yurchak 2005 etc.).

'Cross-border shopping' had different meanings for different socio-economic classes. According to Bartlett (2010: 241–2) shopping trips, travelling abroad and foreign goods provided an experience enriching the cultural capital of the middle classes in socialism. Wessely (2002: 7) notes that for the socialist middle class it served for showing off their status and maintain a social differentiation. Further it provided an additional income to the lower-middle or working class. 'Cross-border shopping' in neighboring Austria and Italy did not only mean creating stockpiles, but became as well a status symbol. Danica, an opera singer, born in 1958 to a working family in Ljubljana's surroundings, remembered:

"I remember my classmate, who came from a family of teachers. I admired them because they were so educated and cultivated and she admired me because we were going to Austria to shop and they did not."

Social stratification of 'cross-border shopping' manifested itself in space. In the 1970s, Ponte Rosso became a symbol of a consumer mentality, adjusted to socialist consumers with not much money (Repe, 1998: 94). According to the narration of female informants, the biggest difference between Slovenes existed in the fact that poor people went to shop in Ponte Rosso with cheap stands and cheap

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goods and wealthier visited shopping centers – magazines (*Via Mazzini, Corso Italia, Via Cardussi*) in Trieste. Stores had been more expensive, but provided products of better quality. Informants' perception of shopping abroad was influenced by their social status, education, income and their worldview. The fact that the political elite, the working class and the critics of the regime met in Italy and Austria while shopping is, according to Repe (1998: 96), a reason why self-managed socialism was not taken seriously by many in the last two decades of its existence.

According to Bowbly (1997: 99), shopping is not only hard work, but is primarily an 'experience'. While talking about their 'cross-border shopping' experiences, many informants often added that they went abroad to see something and to have fun. Meta would browse through products while doing shopping in Italy and Austria, sometimes without buying anything.

"Me and my friend got lost once in Italy. We were walking and walking. She had other desires than me. We were window-shopping in different stores … In the end we did not buy anything there."

In practice, Meta experienced shopping as a leisure activity with window-shopping, browsing and daydreaming, which did not necessarily lead to a purchase. As stated in Švab (2002: 70), reasons for shopping abroad were based on irrational complex reasons, stemming from the experience of longing. Marija, a housewife, born in Most na Soči in 1941, remembered:

"When we went to Italy, we went there to feast our eyes. Like nowadays, for example, when you go to a store in Ljubljana. You do not go there with an exclusive intention of buying something, but it is nice to see what they have."

Danica, born in 1944 in Celje, remembered shopping in Austria:

"When we arrived there, it was … Even we, oldies, had big eyes and were impressed by everything we could see there in contrast to the conditions at home. When children grew a little bit, we went there all together by car. We could hardly get them out of the store. It was necessary to feast your eyes and we bought something also."

Campbell (2001: 98, 102) points out that longing creates desire for unattainable goods. Shopping is performed in order to experience pleasure, which is a consequence of the self-allusive hedonism; but first the discomfort, associated with the need and the belief that the satisfaction will bring pleasure have to occur. The main motive of consumers is the desire to experience the pleasant scenes that their

imagination is generating. Although needs are rapidly extinguished, the longing, generated by daydreaming, is not, and consumers are constantly looking for new products to replace the object of desire (Campbell, 2001: 136–7). Appadurai (1996: 136–7) points out that the search for novelty is only a symptom of a deeper consuming discipline, in which desire is organized around the moral, aesthetic and material practice of short duration. The meaning of consumption is the longing itself, therefore the main motive of the modern consumer is unmaterialistic - the ultimate goal is the experience of pleasure, not the possession of the objects of consumption (Bauman, 2001: 13).

"When I entered the store, I would buy everything! My husband said: 'You know what, if I would give you my credit card, you would empty it' (laughing). You had wishes. I had terrible desires for clothing."

This is how shopping in Italy was remembered by Tatjana, a social worker, born in Celje in 1958. Luthar (2010: 352, 356) notes that for women strolling in the company of other women and the pleasure of looking at objects in Trieste was an integral part of the 'female' shopping. Although informants mainly perceived cross-border consumption as hard-work, connected with the household, they also felt a longing for the fashionable Western products. As stated by informants there was a differentiation between genders in regard to shopping across the border and regarding the product selection. Women were mainly buying food and household products, clothes and cosmetics while men bought technical products. While shopping together, men and women were, according to informants, buying products connected with home equipment, such as ceramic tiles, wallpapers, television sets. When buying bigger appliances such as washing machines or cars, men would perform the purchase alone or in the company of other men.

When it comes to the experience of 'cross-border shopping', almost without exception women informants expressed a bigger longing for objects than men which confirms Campbell's (1997) findings that male shopping rhetoric is focused on the need, while woman's rhetoric is concentrated on the desire and longing. Campbell (1997: 171) assumes that women find it easier than men to obtain enjoyment from shopping because female fantasies tend to resolve around what they look like much more than it is true for males and also because they daydream more than men and hence can be more easily related to clothes and adornment. Also, females are socialized into being the aesthetically skilled gender and find it easier to appraise aesthetically significant goods. Both ideologies present each gender's shopping style as the 'natural' and 'rational' way to shop. The male ideology supplies them with

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arguments with which to portray the feminine mode of shopping as 'irrational' and reinforcing the general male stereotype of women as prone to impulsive and irrational conduct.

The decline of border shopping began with the economic crisis of the early 1980s, when the indebted Yugoslav government restricted the outflow of private capital by introducing heavy deposits for cross-border travel. Another factor was the war that led to Yugoslavia's disintegration in 1991. Slovenia separated from Yugoslavia in 1991 and began the process of entering the EU. In 2007 it fulfilled all requirements and became a full EU member state. A new border was established in a place where it had not existed before, now between ex-Yugoslav states. Consequently, with the unification of the European market, cross-border shopping, which today still has an integrative role between all countries within the EU, became less frequent between Slovenia and Italy/Austria, as the newly independent states opened up their markets and became a part of the global flows of capital and commodities.

After Slovenia gained independence in 1991, most of informants no longer went shopping in neighboring Austria and Italy. If they went to Trieste, they went there to visit their relatives or do sight-seeing, but seldom for the purpose of shopping. Trieste was the largest city near to the border with Italy. Its shops, bars, restaurants, and lively streets and especially squares such as Ponte Rosso, looked like a gigantic urban mall. According to informants, after 19991 Trieste was no longer a city that they once knew and liked – it became dull and uninteresting. Ponte Rosso was gone, together with its markets and stalls. Trieste was depopulated and its shops were moved to the south. Milena, born in 1955 in Trzin near Ljubljana, an administrator, remembered:

"The attitude of traders towards us changed after Slovenia became independent. Also, traders became more reserved, introverted and unfriendly towards buyers and no longer gave them the impression, that consumer is a king, as they did before 1991. We did actually spend a lot of money there."

Silva, born in 1941 near Maribor, an administrator, added:

"They regarded us as a purchasing power as we left loads of our money there. After we became independent, they looked down on us, superiorly, like they are something more than we are."

It should be noted that informants spoke from the perspective of a consumer, who is interested in the price of products and not from the perspective of an

employed trader or producer that would be interested in understanding the condition, under which employed traders work today. Narratives vary depending on the perspective, from which informants are speaking, so they must be understood according to this perspective and the wider context (compare to Tsing, 2009).

After 1991, the post-socialist transition led to the process of privatization and expansion of global trade through taking over the former East European markets (see Dunn, 2004; Vodopivec, 2007 etc.) in which according to Petrović (2013) the worker as an ideological figure and a symbol of the value of labor disappeared from public spaces. As stated in O'Dowd (2001: 70), the neoliberal system created a 'borderless' single market, which reduced transaction costs and increased competitiveness by creating a division of labor that would benefit from economies of scale in competition with North America and Japan. State borders have multiplied following the post-1989 collapse of the Soviet empire and despite the rather misleading slogan of the Single European Market – a 'Europe without Frontiers' – the process of European integration has been one of managing an ever-increasing number of national frontiers (O'Dowd, 2001: 68). As stated by Scott (2015: 30) one of the defining characteristics of Post-Cold War Europe coincided with the proliferation of discourses of 'borderlessness' and nation-state decline, has been the driver for national self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe. This drive for re-asserted sovereignty has shifted the political map of Europe, creating new borders and having a fatal blow to multinational federations such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

The newly independent ex-Yugoslav states opened their markets and were integrated into the global flows of capital and commodities. In the period of post-socialism, a transformation of the meanings of socialist consumer items took place. With easily accessible goods previously rare and desired objects became trivial and mundane. As years went by, cross-border shopping became less and less frequent, also because the products, displayed in stores at home and abroad, became more and more similar. New Chinese traders appeared in Trieste (Italy) and in Slovenia. The informants did not find Chinese stores interesting since in their opinion they have too similar appearance and offer. They also described the goods in Chinese stores as cheap and of poor quality. In the current process of rather reconfiguring than obliterating state borders in the EU it is important to consider that some informants associated the described circumstances with the financial crisis and fear of outflow of capital. The context of a global reorganization of capitalism with foreign investments is illustrated by the informants in the case of the spreading of Chinese markets.

International Journal of Contemporary Economics and Administrative Sciences
ISSN: 1925 – 4423
Volume :6, Special Issue:1, Year:2016, pp 87 - 104
Implications of Borders on Culture and Economics
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Nowadays citizens of Slovenia do not feel that same need to cross borders to access foreign goods, since international retail chains have their outlets in most cities and imported goods are easily available at home also. However, the phenomena of cross-border shopping has not completely disappeared. Reasons for the contemporary cross-border shopping are as pragmatic as they were in socialism. Despite the good availability of imported products in their domestic stores, Slovenes still shop in neighboring Austria and Italy mainly due to the lower prices of products in the stores.

Conclusion

The article pointed out the important distinction between shopping tourism and leisure tourism, providing a distinctive understanding of cross-border shopping in socialist Slovenia. It discussed the people's perception on cross-border shopping in the context of gender division, paying special attention to a newly acquired cultural capital. Through the experience of cross-border shopping and by learning where, what and how to shop, informants were gaining cultural capital, which manifested itself in cultural competences and knowledge of how to consume. This contribution critically evaluated the influence of the construction of the socialist 'Other' in the anthropological analyses of post-socialism. The socialist economy is understood in this context as insufficient, constructed and neglecting its citizen. It was shown that cross-border shopping evokes pleasant memories by informants and associations with the Yugoslav era of peace and plenty and people's notions of what constitutes the 'good life' in the Yugoslav society.

According to Mikula (2010) the practice of cross-border shopping is deeply implicated in the former Yugoslav nation-building narratives and in the identities of the citizens of the ex-Yugoslav independent countries. The narratives enacted the hegemonic narrative of Yugoslavia's 'uniqueness' by translating it into the lived experience of pleasures, unavailable in the countries of the Eastern Block. According to Repe (1998: 96) the shopping abroad between 1950 and 1970 has to be understood in a broader context, including movies, television, the development of foreign tourism in Slovenia and economic orientation towards more liberal social and economic policies while trying to become a part of the Western consumption culture. By consuming abroad Yugoslavs were indirectly putting pressure on the domestic politics, taking into account the demands for a higher standard of living.

With the onset of capitalism and Slovenia joining the EU the country saw a rise in poverty, unemployment, discontent with the market economy and social inequality. Discourses, reflecting the disappointment of informants regarding the

closed shops in Trieste and the unkindness of traders on cross-border shopping must be understood also in the context of political implications of the historical changes and processes of de- and re-bordering in post-socialist Yugoslavia that occurred after its disintegration in 1991 and lead to the Europe we know today. We also need to take into consideration the dissatisfaction with the sale of public property and with contemporary discourses, present in the Slovenian public sphere, which are surrounding the sale, and the loss of rights that ex-Yugoslav citizens had under socialism, such as guaranteed paid work and other social rights. The discourses are not necessarily evidence of nostalgia, but rather a response to today's feeling of insecurity in the framework of discontentment with the capitalist market economy in former socialist countries, which gives priority to capital rather than people and their social protection. Therefore the narratives of informants on cross-border shopping, together with other forms of post-socialist nostalgia, represent a critique of capitalism and a longing for an alternative economic, social and moral system.

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